



Committed to the future of rural communities.

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## RURAL HOUSING PROGRAMS

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### EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT LOAN AND GRANT RECIPIENTS

*Objective - To make USDA Rural Development Program recipients aware of their rights and responsibilities within the agency's loan and grant programs.*

#### Policy Statement

USDA Rural Development policy prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, political beliefs, sexual orientation, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital or familial status or handicap, as long as the person is legally able to assume the obligations of the program.

These provisions are applicable for:

- Equal access to those persons applying for and receiving loans or grants directly from USDA Rural Development.
- Equal access to persons using services of any developments financed with USDA Rural Development programs.

#### Examples Of Prohibited Actions

- USDA Rural Development may not, on grounds of race, political beliefs, sexual orientation, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital or familial status or handicap:
  - ◆ Deny an individual any service, financial aid or other benefit provided under the program.
  - ◆ Subject an individual to segregation or separate treatment.
  - ◆ Treat an individual differently in determining eligibility or adverse servicing actions.
  - ◆ Discriminate in the selection of members of paneling or advisory boards.
- In determining site or location of facilities, a recipient may not make a selection that will have the effect of discrimination; such as, barriers to persons in wheelchairs, or assigning sites based on any of the above grounds.
- Unequal assessments for dues, charges for usage as in water hookups, or establishing rental rates in apartments.

- Unequal treatment in granting of Section 502 home owner subsidies, or Section 515 Rural Rental Housing rental subsidies.

The examples mentioned represent only some of the many possible violations which are prohibited. Whenever there is a difference in treatment based on anything other than merit or on applicable program regulations, such treatment may constitute an act of discrimination and should be reported to the appropriate officials.

#### USDA Rural Development Requirements

USDA Rural Development staff make periodic visits to rural rental housing and other association type projects, such as water and waste disposal loans, community facility loans and to Rural Development Field offices to assure compliance with the agency's equal opportunity policies. Field offices are reviewed by State Office staff; and each state is visited periodically by the National Office Civil Rights staff. At all levels, USDA Rural Development staff and recipients are monitored for compliance with Equal Opportunity Laws.

USDA Rural Development staff conduct outreach programs to assure all persons are aware of the lending opportunities available. Rural Development offices and association type loan participants are required to display the "...And Justice for All" poster. The agency Field offices and Rural Rental Housing loan recipients also display the "Fair Housing Poster", as well as other notices of USDA's equal opportunity policies. Rental housing project signs must contain an Equal Housing Opportunity logo.

For persons with disabilities, reasonable accommodations may be made to dwellings financed under the single family housing program or to apartments in the rental housing program. Persons requiring accommodations should make a request of the agency or manager stating their needs. Accommodations must be structurally and financially feasible.

USDA Rural Development offices and meeting facilities are located in buildings which are accessible to persons with disabilities. In Nebraska, a person using telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) equipment may contact their local USDA Rural Development office through a TDD relay service, whose phone number is 1-800-833-7352.

#### How To File A Complaint Of Discrimination

Written complaints may be directed to any USDA Rural Development State or Field Office, or may be sent directly to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Washington, DC 20250-9410.

The letter should contain all pertinent information and should state the specific grounds on which a person believes they were discriminated against.

Complaints of discrimination are handled seriously and as quickly as possible. The review or investigation may include a telephone call, written follow-up or a face-to-face interview. Each USDA Rural Development State Office has a designated

Civil Rights Coordinator or Manager who provides training to USDA Rural Development staff, public outreach and assists the national office with complaint investigation.

### **For More Information**

For additional information contact USDA Rural Development's Nebraska State Director or Civil Rights Manager at:

USDA Rural Development  
Attn. State Director or Civil Rights Manager  
Federal Building, Room 152  
100 Centennial Mall North  
Lincoln, NE 68508-3888

Phone: (402) 437-5550 (voice-State Director)  
Fax: (402) 437-5408

Phone: (402) 274-3894 (voice-Civil Rights Manager)  
(402) 437-5598 (voice mail-Civil Rights Manager)  
Fax: (402) 274-3323

National Office Web site: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/Admin/civilrights.htm>  
Nebraska Rural Development Web site: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ne>  
Nebraska State Office Telephone Number: (402) 437-5551  
Nebraska State Office Facsimile Number: (402) 437-5408  
Nebraska State Office TDD Number: (402) 437-5093

*The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).*

*To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.*

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Rural Development - Rural Housing Programs  
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